

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR PATSY TICER

State Air Pollution Control Board

Public Hearing – November 19, 2007

Good evening. My name is Patsy Ticer and I am a member of the Virginia Senate representing Alexandria and adjacent jurisdictions. My constituents, most of whom live in Alexandria, are on the front line for health risks due to airborne pollutants from the Mirant Potomac River power plant in Alexandria. I thank you for this opportunity for me and the residents of Alexandria to comment on the proposed operating permit for the power plant. I have previously testified before the Board on the Mirant operation and I appreciate the diligence of the Board in following the issues that Alexandria and others have raised.

I am again before you on behalf of a diverse group of communities, all of whom are deeply concerned about the environmental and public health consequences of what the Board and the Department of Environmental Quality determine will be the operating regime for this plant. As you know, we all have had an intense interest in the activities of the plant for a number of years. With each new revelation about the operation of the plant and each release of a new study or report about the harmful effects on human health of emissions from coal-burning power plants, more and more Alexandrians and others in neighboring jurisdictions took notice of the problems with this plant. Mirant has simply failed to keep pace with what it should do for the public health and welfare under current and feasible health and technological standards. All eyes are now on this permit process and we should ensure that its results do not allow Mirant to pollute our air.

Alexandria has a specific and real interest in the outcome of this permit process. On behalf of all Alexandrians, and residents in neighboring jurisdictions whose health is at risk due to the plant's emissions, I request an operating permit with strict emissions limits

that maintains air quality well into the future. Alexandria and its residents deserve nothing less. If the plant is to remain our neighbor for many years to come—a situation that is not necessarily the first choice of most Alexandrians—the operating regime for the plant must be far-reaching. By that I mean strict emissions limits for all pollutants that guarantee the public health. We are asking nothing more than Maryland demands of its Mirant plants and that Virginia demands of other plants throughout our state.

This is important especially for the emission of fine particulates which has been a prime concern for all of us here in Alexandria for some time. We are not alone in our concerns for the health risk caused by exposure to particulates. The extensive July 2006 report compiled by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Center for Environmental Assessment leaves no doubt that acute and long-term exposure to $PM_{2.5}$ exacerbates respiratory illnesses and causes premature deaths.⁵ We have the opportunity to fully protect our citizens now and not wait years hence when we discover that the situation has become intolerable again. People are not banging down my door demanding more generation at the plant, but many are demanding that with increased generation comes a responsibility on the part of Mirant for more and better pollution control technology.

I reiterate my previous comments that there must be transparency and responsiveness in the regulatory regime for the plant that mandates oversight and accountability of the emissions levels and operational controls set in the permit. Put simply, the public should have easy access to all emissions data for the plant. To this end, I favor Alexandria's call for a local air pollution control district and committee. This will help to restore the public's confidence in our handling of the issues related to this plant.

I thank you for your attention.